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THE FORTH BRIDGE.

BY BENJAMIN BAKER, C.E.

TWENTY-THREE years ago Parliamentary powers were obtained by the North British Railway Company to construct a bridge across the Firth of Tay, and a bridge across the Firth of Forth, for the purpose of 'securing for the North British, Great Northern, North-Eastern, and Midland Railways, a fair share of the through-traffic between England and the north of Scotland, hitherto practically monopolised by the London and North-Western and Caledonian Railways.' As all the world knows, the original Tay Bridge was constructed and opened for traffic in May 1878; blown down with the loss of seventy-five lives in December 1879; re-constructed, and again opened for traffic in June of last year. The Forth Bridge authorised by the twenty-three-year-old Act of Parliament was to have crossed the Forth at a point five miles above Queensferry where the water was shallow; but the mud proving to be of practically unlimited depth, the project was of necessity abandoned, and another point of crossing selected. This was found at Queensferry, where the island of Inchgarvie stands as a stepping-stone in the middle of the channel, leaving, however, a depth of over 200 feet of water on either side—too deep for intermediate piers—and consequently a bridge having two openings of the unprecedented span of 1700 feet became a necessity, and Parliamentary powers were obtained for its construction fifteen years ago.

Owing to the fall of the Tay Bridge, the original design for the Forth Bridge on the suspension principle was abandoned, and the far more rigid cantilever girder design of Messrs Fowler and Baker was substituted. Operations were commenced in the spring of 1883 by the establishment of large bridge-building works at Queensferry, with special appliances and machines of a novel character adapted to the bending, planing, drilling, and riveting of the 50,000 tons of steel plates and bars required for the superstructure of the great

Bridge. The work since then has been continuously pressed on by day and by night, and the termination of the arduous labours of the engineers and contractors is now within measurable distance, for it is anticipated that the autumn of next year will see the completion of the Bridge.

Since the designs of the Forth Bridge were published, many cantilever bridges have been built in America and elsewhere, and the term cantilever has thus become familiar to the public. Such was not the case originally, and one of the first questions asked by visitors to the Forth Bridge was, 'What is a cantilever bridge?' The word 'cantilever' is, as will be shown in Dr Murray's new English Dictionary, several hundred years old. It means simply a bracket or projecting arm; and a cantilever bridge consists of two such brackets, and a central beam connecting the two ends. When lecturing recently at the Royal Institution, I exhibited what might be termed a living model of the Forth Bridge, arranged as follows: Two men sitting on chairs extended their arms and supported the same by grasping sticks butting against the chairs. This represented the two double cantilevers. The central beam was represented by a short stick slung from the near hands of the two men, and the anchorages of the cantilevers by ropes extending from the other hands of the men to a couple of piles of bricks. When stresses were brought to bear on this system by a load on the central beam, the men's arms and the anchorage ropes came into tension, and the sticks and the chair-legs into compression. In the Forth Bridge it is to be imagined that the chairs are placed a third of a mile apart; that the men's heads are 340 feet above the ground; that the pull on each arm is about 4000 tons, the thrust on each stick over 6000 tons, and the weight on the legs of the chair about 25,000 tons.

The advantages of the cantilever system of construction as regards simplicity and rigidity were appreciated by the Chinese hundreds of years ago, and many timber structures on that

principle are still to be found. No important metallic structure of the kind was, however, in existence previous to the publishing of the designs of the Forth Bridge. The advantages of the system under the conditions found at the Queensferry crossing are enormous. Thus, as the superstructure can be erected without scaffolding, it is immaterial whether the water be two feet or two hundred feet deep. Again, as the cantilevers are built by commencing with the work over the piers, and adding successive portions of steel-work on each side until the cantilevers project the required distance, there is perfect solidity at all stages of the erection, and there are none of those periods of risk and anxiety which occur when girders are built on temporary staging, or are floated into position on pontoons, or otherwise erected. All of the anticipated advantages of the system have been fully realised in the case of the Forth Bridge, for at the present moment the cantilevers project about half their full length over the sea; upwards of 28,000 tons of steel-work have been erected, and not a single plate or bar has been lost or injured in any way during the wildest gales.

At no period of the operations has the Forth Bridge presented greater features of novelty and interest to its thousands of visitors than at present; nevertheless, there were times in the past when works now hidden and forgotten called for all the vigilance and skill of the engineers and contractors. Such were the pier-works at Inchgarvie and South Queensferry. Each of these piers consists of four columns of concrete and masonry, about seventy feet in diameter, founded on rock or boulder clay at depths up to ninety feet below high-water. The usual way in this country of building such piers is to enclose the site within cofferdams and pump out the water. In such a stormy estuary as the Forth this could not be done, so the piers were founded on enormous diving-bells, seventy feet in diameter, the masonry being built on the top of the bells, and the men working within the same, excavating the earth and passing it through air-locks into the open air, and so, by a process of undercutting, sinking the pier like a huge pile through the soft soil to a solid substratum. Powerful air-pumps kept the diving-bells charged with compressed air, by which means the water was excluded, and the men worked in a brilliantly lighted chamber seventy feet in diameter, at a depth of ninety feet below sea-level, as readily as on dry land. Of course it is not given to every one to work with comfort in a place where the barometer stands as high as one hundred and twenty inches, which it did in the Inchgarvie diving-bell caissons. One of the first sensations in passing from the ordinary atmospheric pressure into compressed air is a painful pressure on the drums of the ears, which is relieved by swallowing. A long continuance in a high pressure leads to paralysis of the nerves, the workmen walk with difficult step and a slight

stoop, violent cramps and death often supervene. When Glaisher and Coxwell made their high balloon ascent in 1862, the barometer fell to seven and a half inches, and temporary paralysis of the nerves then occurred; but the matter for surprise is rather that the human organism should sustain at all such wide ranges of atmospheric pressure as from seven and a half inches to one hundred and twenty inches of mercury, than that some amount of personal inconvenience or danger should result from it.

When the masonry piers had been securely founded in the manner described on the rock, or hardly less firm boulder clay forming the bed of the Forth, the erection of the steel superstructure was commenced. Over the piers are lofty steel towers made of four columns 12 feet in diameter and 340 feet high, bound together in all directions to resist wind-storms and the forces resulting from the passage of the heaviest and fastest trains on the East Coast route. An ascent to the top of these towers, at the height of the golden cross on the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, is an event not soon forgotten. Hundreds of visitors, men of science of all nations, turbaned Indian princes, and even venturesome young ladies have done it, and all alike have been impressed by the sublimity of the scene. Standing on the edge of the top platform and glancing down at the workmen hanging in mid-air by fine wire ropes, at the steam-barges manœuvring below laden with portions of the structure, the vessels of all classes at anchor or sailing, and the whole grand panorama of the Firth of Forth, the scene recalls vividly that passage in *King Lear* where Edgar leads Gloucester to the edge of the cliff:

Stand still.—How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
Show scarce so gross as beetles.

Experience has shown that in a very short time workmen lose all sense of the height at which they are working, and that they can not only glance down, but climb down without any feeling of dizziness.

The steel towers being built, the next step was to commence the erection of the great cantilevers. These each project 680 feet from the towers over the sea, and consist of a curved bottom member, shaped like a fishing-rod, tapering from twelve feet diameter at the butt to five feet diameter at the end, connected by diagonal bracing to an inclined top member of lattice construction. This massive steel-work is erected without scaffolding by powerful steam cranes and winches carried by the Bridge itself.

Everything in connection with the Forth Bridge except the rolling of the steel plates has been done on the spot, and this has necessitated the establishment at the little burgh of Queensferry of one of the largest bridge-building works in the kingdom, capable of turning out 1500 tons of finished girder-work every month. More than half a million sterling has been expended in machinery, buildings, railways, steamboats, and

other plant. The number of men employed on the works has at times been as high as 4300. Much of the work at the Forth Bridge requires men possessed of great coolness, courage, and hardiness. Nervousness would simply induce an accident, and consequently when crawling along narrow planks or angle bars with a clear drop of three or four hundred feet below them, the men have to dismiss from their minds all ideas of what students of dynamics call the motion of a falling body under the unbalanced action of its own weight. Unfortunately, men have fallen from all heights on to the lower staging, and into the sea; but having reference to the novelty and difficulty of the work, the number of accidents has been singularly small. The works have been carried on under the personal direction of Sir John Fowler, K.C.M.G., and Mr Benjamin Baker, the engineers, and Mr William Arrol, the chief contractor, aided by a large staff of clever and zealous assistants.

It must be admitted on all hands that the great Forth Bridge will be the crowning work of the railway system in this country, and that nothing of the kind of equal importance can reasonably be expected to follow it. It will also be admitted that it would be difficult to exaggerate the benefits which railways have conferred upon this country. At the beginning of the century, when Mr Pitt wanted a few millions, the terms he offered were one hundred and fifty-seven pounds of three per cents. for one hundred sovereigns. We have lately seen Mr Goschen's successful conversion of the National Debt into a two and three-quarter per cent. stock, and there is little doubt that the altered conditions are largely due to the changes wrought by the development of the railway system. When, therefore, it is asked whether the end will justify the means, and whether the saving in time and distance will pay for the heavy expenditure on the Forth Bridge, the obvious answer is that time is becoming more and more a priceless commodity, and that the quickest route, irrespective of almost all other considerations, will carry the traffic and earn the money. The opening of the Forth Bridge will in all probability lead to a noteworthy acceleration of the already fast running of the northern expresses. That such is practicable is proved by actual experience both in this country and America. A speed of 75 miles is often attained on the Great Northern Railway, and it was also attained two years ago on the New York Central Railway, when an average speed of 65½ miles an hour was maintained for the whole distance of 149 miles between Syracuse and Rochester. Sooner or later, as railway managers have found out to their cost, whatever can be done to improve the train service has to be done, and as the construction of the Forth Bridge has demonstrated the practicability of building railway bridges of great span, New Yorkers have ceased to be content with ferry-boats, and demand the substitution of a bridge across the Hudson. Two such projects are before the public—one a bridge having two spans of 1600 feet each, and another with a single span of 2800 feet. No further evidence is required of the great influence which the Forth Bridge will exercise on the railways of the future; for it is already clearly shown that the Forth Bridge, great work though it be, is but

the pioneer of still greater works in countries whose physical features and commercial requirements demand the building of railway bridges of great span.

THIS MORTAL COIL.

BY GRANT ALLEN, AUTHOR OF 'IN ALL SHADES,' ETC.

CHAP. XLIII.—AT MONTE CARLO.

HUGH had not had the carriage entirely to himself all the way; a stranger got in with him at Mentone station. But so absorbed was Hugh in his own thoughts that he hardly noticed the newcomer's presence. Full of Elsie and drunk with joy, he had utterly forgotten the man's very existence more than once. Crying and laughing by turns as he went, he must have impressed the stranger almost like a madman. He had smiled and frowned and chuckled to himself, exactly as if he had been quite alone; and though he saw occasionally, with a careless glee, that the stranger leaned back nervously in his seat and seemed to shrink away from him, as if in bodily fear, he scarcely troubled his head at all about so insignificant and unimportant a person. His soul was all engrossed with Elsie. What was a casual foreigner to him, with Elsie, Elsie, Elsie, recovered?

The Casino gardens were already filled with loungers and children—gamblers' children, in gay Parisian dresses—but the gaming-rooms themselves were not yet open. Hugh, who had come there half by accident, for want of somewhere better to go to, and who meant to return to San Remo by the first train, strolled casually without any thought to a seat on the terrace. Preoccupied as he was, the loveliness of the place nevertheless took him fairly by surprise. His poet's soul lay open to its beauty. He had never visited Monte Carlo before; and even now he had merely mentioned the name at random as the first that occurred to him when he went to take his ticket at the San Remo booking-office. He had stumbled upon it wholly by chance. But he was glad he had come; it was all so lovely. The smiling aspect of the spot took his breath away with wonder. And the peaceful air of all that blue bay soothed somewhat his feverish excitement at the momentous discovery that Elsie, his Elsie, was still living.

He gazed around him with serene delight. This was indeed a day of joyful surprises. The whole place looked more like a scene in fairyland in full pantomime time than like a prosaic bit of this workaday world of ours. Lovely by nature, that exquisite spot—the fairest, perhaps, in all Europe—has been made still lovelier by all the resources of human art. From the water's edge, terraces of luscious tropical vegetation rise one after another in successive steps towards the grand façade of the gleaming Casino, divided from one another by parapets of marble balustrades, and connected together from place to place by broad flights of Florentine staircases. Fantastic clusters of palms and aloes, their base girt round with rare exotic flowers, thrust themselves cunningly into the foreground of every beautiful view, so that the visitor looks out upon the bay and the mountains through artistic vistas deftly arranged in the very spot where a Tuscan

painter's exuberant fancy would have wished to set them for scenic effect. To Warren Reli, to be sure, Monte Carlo seemed always too meretriciously obtrusive to deserve his pencil; but to Hugh Massinger's more gorgeous oriental taste it revealed itself at once in brilliant colours as a dream of beauty and a glimpse of Paradise.

He looked away next to the nearer foreground. The dreamland of Monte Carlo floated in morning lights before his enchanted eyes. The great and splendid turreted Casino, the exquisite green lawns and gardens, the brilliant rows of shops and cafés, the picturesque villas dotted up and down the smooth and English-looking sward, the Italian terraces with their marble steps, the glorious luxuriance of waving palm-trees, massive agaves, thick clustering yucca blossoms, and heavy breadths of tropical foliage—all alike fired and delighted his poetical nature. The bright blue of Mediterranean seas, the dazzling white of Mediterranean sunshine, the brilliant russet of Mediterranean roofs, soothed and charmed his too exalted mood. He needed repose, beauty, and nature. He looked at his watch and consulted the little local time-table he had bought at San Remo.—After all, why return to that lonely *pension* and to dead Winifred so very soon? It was better to be here—here, where all was bright and gay and lively. He might sit in the gardens all day long and return by the last train to-night to Winifred. No need to report himself now any longer. He was free, free: he would stop at Monte Carlo.

Why leave, indeed, that glorious spot, the loveliest and deadliest siren of our civilisation? He felt his spirit easier here, with those great gray crags frowning down upon him from above, and those exquisite bays smiling up at him from below. Nature and art had here combined to woo and charm him. It seemed like a poet's midsummer dream, crystallised into lasting and solid reality by some gracious wave of Titania's wand.

He murmured to himself those lines from the *Daisy*:

Nor knew we well what pleased us most;
Not the clipt palm of which they boast;
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast:

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine.

Exquisite lines! He looked across to Cap Martin and understood them all. Then his own verses on his first Italian tour came back with a burst of similarity to his memory. In his exultation and unnatural excitement he had the audacity to compare them with Tennyson's own. Why might not he, too, build at last that mansion he had talked about long, long ago, on the summit of Parnassus?

I found it not, where solemn Alps and gray
Draw purple glories from the new-born day;
Nor where huge sombre pines loom overhanging
Niagara's rainbow spray.

Nor in loud psalms whose palpitating strain
Thrills the vast dome of Buonarrotti's fane:
On canvas quick with Guido's earnest passion,
Or Titian's stately vein.

Tennyson indeed! Who prates about Tennyson? Were not his own sonorous round-mouthed verses worth every bit as much as many Tennysons? He repeated them over lovingly to himself. The familiar ring intoxicated his soul. He was a poet too. He would yet make a fortune, for himself and for Elsie!

Echoes, echoes, mere echoes all of them! But to Hugh Massinger, in his parental blindness, quite as good and true as their inspired originals. So the minor poet for ever deceives himself.

Guido, to be sure, he now knew to be feeble. He had outlived Guido, and reached Botticelli. Not that the one preference was any profounder or truer at bottom than the other; but fashion had changed, and he himself had changed with it. He wrote those verses long, long ago. In those days Guido was not yet exploded. He wished he could find now some good disyllabic early Italian name (with the accent on the first) that would suit modern taste and take the place in the verse of that too tell-tale Guido.

For Elsie was alive, and he must be a poet still. He must build up a fortune for himself and for Elsie.

Somebody touched his elbow as he sat there. He looked up, not without some passing tinge of annoyance. What a bore to be discovered! He didn't want to be disturbed or recognised just then—at Monte Carlo—and with Winifred lying dead on her bed at San Remo!

It was a desultory London club acquaintance—a member of the Savage—and with him was the man who had come with Hugh in the train from Mentone.

'Hullo, Massinger,' the desultory Savage observed complacently: 'who'd have ever thought of meeting you here. Down in the South for the winter, or on a visit? Come for pleasure, or is your wife with you? Whitestrand too much for you in a foggy English November, eh?'

Hugh made up his mind at once to his course of action: he would say not a single word about Winifred. 'On a visit,' he answered, with some slight embarrassment. 'I expect to stop only a week or two.' As a matter of fact, it was not his intention to remain very long after Winifred's funeral. He was in haste, as things stood, to return to England—and Elsie.—'I came over with your friend from Mentone this morning, Lock.'

'And he took you for a maniac, my dear boy,' the other answered with a quiet smile. 'I've duly explained to him that you are not mad, most noble Massinger; you're only a poet. The terms, though nearly, are not quite synonymous.' Then he added in French: 'Let me introduce you now to one another. M. le Lieutenant Fédor Raffalevsky, of the Russian navy.'

M. Raffalevsky bowed politely. 'I fear, Monsieur,' he said with a courtly air, 'I caused you some slight surprise and discomfort by my peculiar demeanour in the train this morning.—To tell you the truth, your attitude discomposed me. I was coming to Monte Carlo to join in the play, and I carried no less a sum for the purpose than three hundred thousand francs about my body. Not knowing I had to deal with a person of honour, I felt somewhat nervous, you may readily conceive, as to your muttered remarks

and apparent abstraction. Figure to yourself my situation. So much money makes one naturally fanciful! Monsieur, I trust, will have the goodness to forgive me.

'To say the truth,' Hugh answered frankly, 'I was so much absorbed in my own thoughts that I scarcely noticed any little hesitation you may have happened to express in your looks and manner. Three hundred thousand francs is no doubt a very large sum. Why, it's twelve thousand pounds sterling—isn't it, Lock?—You mean to try your luck, then, *en gros*, Monsieur?'

The Russian smiled. 'For once,' he answered, nodding his head good-humouredly. 'I have a system, I believe: an infallible system. I'm a mathematician myself by taste and habit. I've invented a plan for tricking fortune—the only safe one ever yet discovered.'

Hugh shook his head almost mechanically. 'All systems alike are equally bad,' he replied in a politely careless tone. Gambler as he had always been by nature, he had too much common-sense to believe in martingales. 'The bank's bound to beat you in the longrun, you know. It has the deepest purse, and must win in the end, if you go on long enough.'

The Russian's face wore a calm expression of superior wisdom. 'I know better,' he answered quietly. 'I have worked for years at the doctrine of chances. I've calculated the odds to ten places of decimals. If I hadn't, do you think I'd risk three hundred thousand francs on the mere turn of a wretched roulette table?'

The doors of the Casino were now open, and players were beginning to crowd the gambling rooms. 'Let's go in and watch him,' Lock suggested in English. 'There can be no particular harm in looking on. I'm not a player myself, like you, Massinger; but I want to see whether this fellow really wins or loses. He believes in his own system most profoundly, I observe. He's a very nice chap, the Paymaster of the Russian Mediterranean squadron. I picked him up at the Cercle Nautique at Nice last week; and he and I have been going everywhere in my yacht ever since together.'

'All right,' Hugh answered, with the horrible new-born careless glee of his recent emancipation. 'I don't mind twopence what I do to-day. *Vogue la galère!* I'm game for anything, from pitch-and-toss to manslaughter.' He never suspected himself how true those casual words of the stock slang expressions were soon to become. Pitch-and-toss first, and afterwards manslaughter.

They strolled round together to the front of the Casino, that stately building in the grandest Haussmannian Parisian style, planted plump down with grotesque incongruity beneath the lofty crags of the Maritime Alps. The palace of sin faces a large and handsome open square, with greensward and fountains and parterres of flowers; and all around stand coquettish shops, laid temptingly out with bonnets and jewelry and aesthetic products; for people who win largely disburse freely, and many ladies hover about the grounds, with fashionable dresses and shady antecedents, by no means slow to share the good fortune of the lucky and all too generous hero of the day. Hugh mounted the entrance staircase with the rest of the crowd, and pushed through the swinging glass doors of the Casino. Within, they came

upon the large and spacious vestibule, its roof supported by solid marble and porphyry pillars. Presentation of their cards secured them the right of entry to the *salles de jeu*, for everything is free at Monte Carlo—except the tables. You may go in and out of the rooms as you please, and enjoy for nothing—so long as you are not fool enough to play—the use of two hundred European newspapers, and the music of a theatre, where a splendid band discourses hourly to all comers the enlivening strains of Strauss and of Gungl. But all that is the merest prelude. The play itself, which forms the solid core of the entire entertainment, takes place in the gambling saloons on the left of the Casino.

Furnished with their indispensable little ticket of introduction, the three newcomers entered the rooms, and took their place tentatively by one of the tables. The Russian, selecting a seat at once, addressed himself to the task like one well accustomed to systematic gambling. Hugh and his acquaintance Lock stood idly behind, to watch the outcome of his infallible method.

And all the time, alone at San Remo, Winifred's body lay on the solitary bed of death, attended only at long intervals by the waiting-women and landlady of the shabby *pension*.

CHAPTER XLIV.—'LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, MAKE YOUR GAME!'

Though play had only just begun when Hugh and his companions entered the saloon, the rooms were already pretty well crowded with regular visitors, who came early to secure their accustomed seats, and who leant forward with big rolls of gold piled high in columns on the table before them, marking down with a dot on their tablets the winning numbers, and staking their twenty or thirty napoleons with mechanical calmness on every turn of that fallacious whirligig. Hugh had often heard or read sensational descriptions of the eagerness depicted upon every face, the anxious gaze, the rapt attention, the obvious fascination of the game for its votaries; but what struck him rather on the first blush of it all was the exact opposite: the stolid indifference with which men and women alike, inured to the varying chances of the board, lost or won a couple of dozen pounds or so on each jump of the pea, as though it were a matter of the supremest unconcern to them in their capacity of gamblers whether they or the bank happened to take up each particular little heap of money. They seemed, indeed, to be mostly rich and *blasé* people, suffering from a chronic plethora of the purse, who could afford to throw away their gold like water, and who threw it away carelessly out of pure wantonness, for the sake of the small modicum of passing excitement yielded by the uncertainty to their jaded palates.

Nevertheless, he remarked with surprise from the very first moment that even at that early hour of the morning, when the day's work had hardly yet got well under weigh, the rooms, though large and lofty, were past all belief hot and close, doubtless from the strange number of feverish human hearts and lungs, all throbbing and panting their suppressed excitement, in that single Casino, and warming the air with their internal fires. He raised his eyes and glanced

for a moment around the saloon. It was spacious and handsome, after its own gaudy fashion, richly decorated in the Mauresque style of the Spanish Alhambra, though with far less taste and harmony of colour than in the restorations to which his eye had been long familiarised in London and Sydenham. At Monte Carlo, to say the truth, a certain subdued tinge of vulgar garishness just mars the native purity of the style into perfect accord with the nature and purposes of that temple of Mammon in his vilest avatar.

Hugh, however, for his part had no scruples in the matter of gambling. He gazed up and down at the ten or twelve roulette tables that crowded the *salles de jeu*, with the utmost complacency. He liked play, and it diverted him to watch it, especially when the man he meant to observe was the propounder of a new and infallible system. Infallible systems are always interesting: they collapse with a crash—amusing to everybody except their propounder. He bent his eyes closely upon the hands of the Russian, who had now pulled out his roll of gold and silver, and was eagerly beginning to back his chosen numbers, doubtless with the blind and stupid confidence of the infatuated system-monger.

Raffalevsky, however, played a cautious opening. He started modestly with four five-franc pieces, distributed about on a distinct plan, and each of them staked on a separate number. The five-franc piece, in fact, is the minimum coin permitted to show its face on those aristocratic tables; and six thousand francs is the maximum sum which the bank allows any one player to hazard on a single twist of the roulette: between these extreme limits, all possible systems must needs confine themselves, so that the common martingale of doubling the stakes at each unsuccessful throw becomes here practically impossible. Raffalevsky's play had been carefully calculated. Hugh, who was already well versed in the mysteries of roulette, could see at a glance that the Russian had really a method in his madness. He was working on strict mathematical principles. Sometimes he divided or decreased his stake; sometimes, at a bound, he trebled or quadrupled it. Sometimes he plunged on a single number; sometimes for several turns together he steadily backed either red or black, *pair* or *impair*. But on the whole, by hap or cunning, he really seemed to be winning rapidly. His sustained success made Hugh more anxious than ever to watch his play. It was clear he had invented a genuine system. Might it be after all, as he said, an infallible one?

If only Hugh could find it out! He must, he would marry Elsie. How grand to marry her, a rich man! He would love to lay at Elsie's feet a fortune worthy of his beautiful Elsie.

Things were all changed now. He had something to live, to work, to gamble for! If only he could say to his recovered Elsie: 'Take me, rich, famous, great—take me, and Whitestrang, no longer sand-swept. I lay it all in your lap for your gracious acceptance—these piles of gold—these heaps of coins!' But he had nothing, nothing, save the few napoleons he carried about him. If he had but the Russian's twelve thousand pounds now! he would play and win—win a fortune at a stroke for his darling Elsie.

Fired with the thought, he watched Raffalevsky more closely than ever. In time, he began to perceive by degrees upon what principle the money was so regularly lost and won. It was a good principle, mathematically correct. Hugh worked it out hastily on the back of an envelope. Yes, in one hundred and twenty chances out of one hundred and thirty-seven, a man ought to win ten louis a turn, against seven lost, on an average reckoning. At last, Raffalevsky, after several good hazards, laid down five louis boldly upon 24. Hugh touched his shoulder with a gentle hand. 'Wrong,' he murmured in French. 'You make a mistake there. You abandon your principle. You ought to have backed 27 this time.'

The Russian looked back at him with an angry smile; so slight a scratch at once brought out the Tartar. 'Back it yourself, then, Monsieur,' he said sullenly. 'I make my own game.—Pray, don't interrupt me. If your calculations go so very deep, put your own money down, and try your luck against me. My principles, when I first discovered them, were not worked out on the back of an envelope.'

The gibe offended Hugh. In a second he saw that the fellow was wrong: he was misinterpreting the nature of his own discovery. He had neglected one obvious element of the problem. The error was mathematical: Hugh snapped at it mentally with his keen perception—he had taken a first in mathematics at Oxford—and noted at once that if the Russian pursued his present course for many turns together he was certain before long to go under hopelessly. For the space of one deep breath he hesitated and held back. What was the use of gambling with no capital to go upon? Then, more for the sake of proving himself right than of winning money, he dived into his pocket with a sudden resolution, and drawing forth five napoleons from his scanty purse, laid them without a word on 27, and awaited patiently the result of his action.

'The game is made,' the croupier called out as Hugh withdrew his hand. After that warning signal, no stakes can be further received or altered. Whirr-r-r went the roulette. The pea span round with whizzing speed. Hugh looked on, all eager, in a fever of suspense. He half regretted he had backed 27. He was sure to lose. The chances, after all, were so enormous against him. Thirty-six to one! If you win, it's a fluke. What a fool he had been to run the risk of making himself look small in this gratuitous way before the cold eyes of that unfeeling Russian.

He knew he was right, of course: 27 was the system. But a sensible system never hangs upon a single throw. It depends upon a long calculation of chances. You must let one risk balance another. Raffalevsky had twelve thousand pounds to fall back upon. If he failed once, to him that didn't matter: he could go on still and recoup himself in the end by means of the system. Only under such circumstances of a full purse can any method of gambling ever by any possibility be worth anything. Broken reeds at the best, even for a Rothschild, they must almost necessarily pierce the hand that leans upon them if it ventures to try them on a petty scrap of pocket capital. And Hugh's

capital was grotesquely scrappy for such a large venture—he had only some seventy-five pounds about him.

How swift is thought, and how long a time it seemed before the pea jumped! He had reasoned out all this, and a thousand-fold more, in his own mind with lightning speed while that foolish wheel was still whirling and spinning. If he won at all, it could only be by a rare stroke of fickle fortune. Thirty-six to one were the odds against him! And if he lost, he must either leave off at once, or else, in accordance with the terms of the system, stake ten louis next turn on 14, or nine louis on odd or even. At that rate, his poor little capital would soon be exhausted. How he longed for Raffalevsky's twelve thousand to draw upon. He would feel so small if 27 lost. And if there was anything on earth that Hugh Massinger hated it was feeling small: the sense of ignominy, and its opposite the feeling of personal dignity, were deeply rooted in the very base and core of his selfish nature.

At last the pea jumped. A breathless second! The croupier looked over at it and watched its fall. 'Vingt-sept,' he cried in his stereotyped tone. Hugh's heart leapt up with a sudden wild bound. The fever of play had seized on him now. He had won at a stroke—a hundred and seventy-five louis.

Here was a capital indeed upon which to begin. He would back his own system with this against Raffalevsky's. Or rather, he would back Raffalevsky's discovery, as rightly apprehended and worked out by himself, against Raffalevsky's discovery as wrongly applied and distorted through an essential error of detail by its original inventor.

It was system pitted against system now. The croupier raked in the scattered gold heaped on the various cabalistic numbers, squares, and diamonds—and amongst them, Raffalevsky's five napoleons upon 24. Then he paid the lucky players their gains; counting out three thousand five hundred francs with practised ease, and handing them to Hugh, who was one among the principal winners by that particular turn. In two minutes more, the board was cleared; the wooden cue had hauled in all the bank's receipts; the fortunate players had added their winnings to the heap before them; and all was ready for a further venture. 'Messieurs et mesdames, faites le jeu,' the harsh voice of the croupier cried mechanically. The players laid down their stakes once more; the croupier waited the accustomed interval. 'Le jeu est fait,' he cried at last; and the pea again went buzzing and whizzing. Hugh was backing his system this time on the regular rule: three louis on the left-hand row of numbers.

He lost. That was but a small matter, of course. He had won to begin with; and a stroke of luck at the first outset is responsible for the greater part of the most reckless playing. Time after time he staked and played—staked and played—staked and played again, sometimes losing, sometimes winning; but on the whole, the system, as he had anticipated, proved fairly trustworthy. The delirium of play had taken full possession of him, body and soul, by this time. He was piling up gold; piling it fast;

how fast, he never stopped to think or count: enough for him that the system won: as long as it won, what waste of time at a critical moment to stop and reckon the extent of his fortune.

He only knew that every now and then he thrust a fresh handful of gold or notes into his pocket—for Elsie—and went on playing with feverish eagerness with the residue of his winnings left upon the table.

By two o'clock, however, he began to get hungry. This sort of excitement takes it rapidly out of a man. Luck had disappeared from the scene long since. He wanted somebody to go and feed with. So he leaned over and whispered casually to Raffalevsky: 'Shall we turn out now and take a mouthful or two of lunch together?'

Raffalevsky looked back at him with a pale face. 'As you will,' he said wearily. 'I'm tired of this play. Losses, losses all along the line. The system breaks down here and there, I find, in actual practice.'

So Hugh had observed with a placid smile for the last hour or two.

They left the tables, and strolled across the square to the stately portals of the *Hotel de Paris*. Hugh was in excellent spirits indeed. 'Permit me to constitute myself the host, monsieur,' he said with his courtliest air to Raffalevsky. He had won heavily now, and was in a humour on all grounds to spend his winnings with princely magnificence.

The Russian bowed. 'You are very kind, monsieur,' he answered with a smile. Then he added, half apologetically, at the end of a pause: 'And after all, it was my own system.'

The carte was tempting, and money was cheap—cheaper than in London. Hugh ordered the most sumptuous and *recherché* of luncheons, with wine to match, on a millionaire scale, and they sat down together at the luxurious tables of that lordly restaurant. While they waited for their red mullet, Hugh pulled out a stray handful of notes and gold and began to count up the extent of his winnings. He trembled himself when he saw to how very large a sum the total amounted. He had pocketed no less in that short time than fourteen hundred louis! Fools that plod and toil and moil in London for a long, long year upon half that pittance! How he pitied and despised them! In three brief hours, by the aid of a system, he had won offhand fourteen hundred louis!

He mentioned the sum of his winnings with bated breath to the unsympathetic Russian. Raffalevsky bit his lip with undisguised jealousy. 'And I,' he said curtly, in a cold voice, 'have dropped sixteen hundred.'

It's wonderful with what placid depths of heroism the winners can endure the losses of the losers. 'Never mind, my friend,' Hugh answered back cheerily. 'Fortune always takes a turn in the long-run. Her wheel will alter. You'll win soon. And besides, you know, you have an infallible system.'

'It's the cursed system that seems to have betrayed me,' the Russian blurted back with a savage outburst of unchecked temper. 'It worked out so well on paper, somehow; but on these precious tables, with their turns and their evolutions, something unexpected is always bobbing

up to spoil and prevent my legitimate triumph. Would you believe it, now, last turn but one, and the turn before it, I had calculated seven hundred and twenty-two distinct chances all in my favour to a miserable solitary one against me: and not one of the seven hundred and twenty-two good combinations ever turned up at all, but just the one beastly unlucky conjunction that made against me and ruined my speculations. You might play for seven hundred and twenty-two turns on an average again without that ever happening a second time to confound you.'

AUTOGRAPHS.

Or all the collecting manias of the present time, that of accumulating autographs is not only one of the most luring, but one of the most instructive. Nearly all of us seem possessed of a natural love for collecting something. The school-boy gloats over his postage stamps, and longs for certain three-cornered and oval specimens; the naturalist thinks his collection of birds' eggs and dried skins *par excellence*; the mineralogist delights in ticketing and arranging his precious wonders from beneath the earth's surface; and the lover of character and genius treasures up in a costly album fragments of thought and letters written by the hands of great men of the past and present.

It is an error to imagine that the autograph collector merely thirsts for the signatures of his heroes; the signature truly is a *sine quâ non*, but it must be at the end of a letter, dated, and containing some sentence or phrase likely to display something of the true character or work of the writer. More of the actual character of a man may occasionally be gathered from one letter than from a whole lifetime of public writing or public service. A signature cut from a letter, or a franked envelope, is considered next to valueless unless the signature be that of some person who seldom or never wrote long letters in his or her own hand. A holograph letter of our kings and queens is a thing seldom or never seen, so a document signed by any of them has to be accepted by the autograph collector. It is not the autographs of crowned heads and other persons who have become famous simply by virtue of their office that the true lover of autographs is eager for, but rather letters by such men as Thackeray, Dickens, Byron, Tennyson, Pitt, Disraeli, Gladstone, Stephenson, Johnson, Lamb, Lytton, and Carlyle. Documents written by Spenser, Raleigh, Marlowe, Ben Jonson, Bacon, &c., are so rare that the hope of ever possessing such is seldom entertained by even the most enthusiastic collectors who have the best of chances at their command. Autograph collecting is not, therefore, a mere whim, but rather a pursuit, taken up with the idea of gleaning from their letters the real characters of great men and women, and the studying of the writing formed by the mind and hand of men such as the author of *Pendennis*; or of the man who, after ten years' sorrowing and solitude, immortalised his departed friend in *In Memoriam*. Putting aside the hard and fast rules laid down by persons who make a profession of delineating character from chirography, we seem to possess

a kind of instinct by which we can glean something of a man from his handwriting.

Unpublished fragments of prose and verse are highly prized by the collector, as are also letters containing literary and other advice, short criticisms of men and books, and proofs of friendship and love.

Apart from those collectors who devote their albums to autographs of popular and great men generally, there are many who make collections of the letters of men of a certain calling or a particular period. The Commonwealth is a very favourite subject, and letters and signatures of Cromwell and his contemporaries are becoming very scarce. The writer of this paper has devoted his collection to poets, and it contains nearly two hundred good letters, with but very few duplicates; the collection includes letters and fragments by Burns, Campbell, Longfellow, Keats, Poe, Goethe, Goldsmith, Scott, Wordsworth, Pope, Cowper, Willis, Gray, Coleridge, Tennyson, Holmes, Hood, Swinburne, Browning, Lewis Morris, and Edwin Arnold. Another collection with which the writer is familiar is devoted wholly to the Dr Johnson period, and contains specimens of Johnson, Boswell, Goldsmith, Robertson, Burke, Hume, Smith, Gibbon, Garrick, Fielding, Richardson, Walpole, and Smollett. It is well known that our Queen has a very fine collection of autographs. The British Museum contains a very large number of autographic rarities; but it is usually said that the authorities there allow many documents of interest at sales to go to America, and thus be lost to us probably for ever. The Americans are great collectors, and by no means are they afraid of paying well for anything really good. A complete set of the signers of the Declaration of Independence was sold at the hammer a short while ago for no less than five hundred pounds.

The precise value of an autograph is always doubtful; from one shilling to three hundred pounds is about the usual range, and a pretty wide range too. An A. L. S. (that is, autograph letter signed) by Burns is usually valued at about eighteen pounds; but a long manuscript (published) of his was recently disposed of in a London auction room for two hundred and five pounds. An A. L. S. of Cowper is worth about four or five pounds; of Keats, about ten or twelve pounds; of Tennyson, about one or two pounds; of Browning, one pound or more; of Dickens, about two pounds; of Thackeray, quite double that; of Ruskin, about one pound or less; of Gladstone, about ten shillings; a sign-manual of the Queen, about one pound; of Charles I., about three pounds; an A. L. S. of Darwin, about two pounds; of Carlyle, about two pounds; of Johnson, nearly ten pounds; of Flaxman, about two pounds; and of Cruikshank, about two pounds. The autograph of a peer who is only a peer is valueless. Several large collections have been sold at the hammer two or three times over in this century, each occasion the price obtained being nearly double that of the previous time; that is, if not less than ten or fifteen years has intervened. Interesting state documents, orders to commanders, orders for executions, &c., often crop up, and generally sell at high prices.

It is usually the work of a lifetime to get

together a good collection of autographs, particularly when money is an object. Those who are anxious to have such must never be in a hurry; chances must be waited for, and never missed when they present themselves. Old family papers and any old documents that may be come across should always be ransacked. An autograph letter of any great person can always be begged of those who happen to have such, without feeling under obligation, if the donor is not a collector himself. What can be the use of just one or two interesting letters? The very prevalent method of writing letters, particularly 'catch' letters, to great persons for the sake of getting their handwriting is a poor way of making a collection, and such specimens cannot give much insight into the real character and style of the writer. Some men write many more letters than do others; epistles of all sorts of Charles Dickens are still fairly plentiful, whilst those of Thackeray are getting very scarce, as also are those of the poet-laureate, who is not easily inveigled into writing letters, and therefore it may safely be presumed that good letters of his will in a few years' time become valuable.

Autograph collecting brings us into close contact with many a man too often passed by as a nobody; and a well-arranged album, with portraits and notes added to the specimens, often leads us to view our great men in a new and better light, and it helps to keep fresh in our memories the names of those who are living, or have lived and died, in the public service.

BOLSOVER BROTHERS.

IN FOUR CHAPTERS.

By T. W. SPEIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

'I TRUST, Wally, my boy, that you have not forgotten your promise—the solemn promise you gave me twelve months ago—to have nothing more to do with the turf, and never again to wager even as much as a shilling on a horse as long as you live. You have not forgotten—eh, now?'

'I have not forgotten, uncle—it is impossible that I ever should forget.'

'It does me good to hear you say that. Stick to your promise, my boy, and all may yet be well with you.—You tell me that your practice is increasing—very slowly, it may be, but still surely, which is as much as you can reasonably expect, seeing that it's only a little over a couple of years since you settled here. People have not had time to make your acquaintance, or to discover what a very clever young practitioner they have in their midst in the person of Mr Walter Lindley, F.R.C.S.'

The speaker, a fussy but good-natured elderly gentleman, lay back in his chair, and his ruddy visage broke into a broad smile. Then looking at his watch, he started to his feet. 'I mustn't stay another minute, or I shall miss the seven o'clock train,' he said. 'I shall hardly see you again before Christmas Day, when I hope we shall eat our turkey together, as we did last year; and I fancy I know where there's a drop of fine

old port to be found, although some people will persist in telling you that there's none to be had nowadays worth drinking.'

As uncle and nephew stood for a few moments at the door before parting, the former holding Walter's hand in his, said: 'Above all things, my boy, don't allow yourself to get down-hearted. That's not a bit of good. The struggle is no doubt a tough one just at present; but it ought only to serve to brace your sinews and make you more resolute to succeed in the end. In my opinion, there's no worse way of serving a young fellow than by making things too easy for him at the beginning of his career. But come what may, Wally, let no temptation induce you to break your promise.'

A minute later, Mr Tobias Lindley was trudging cheerily along on his way to the station. His nephew, after a glance up and down the quiet lamp-lighted street, turned indoors with a shiver and shut the door.

Medbury Royal, as all Londoners know, or ought to know, is situated some dozen or thirteen miles outside the metropolitan radius. It is said to be so called because at one time it could boast of having a royal residence in its midst, of which, however, not one stone is now left standing on another; indeed, the very site of the palace is so doubtful and open to dispute that the antiquaries of the neighbourhood have few finer bones of contention over which to wrangle and call names. Modern Medbury is a thriving little town, rendered still more busy and prosperous since two lines of railway have brought it within an hour's ride of the City; as a consequence of which a number of busy bees have found it a desirable place to flit to of an evening, away from the noise and uproar of the great hive where they make honey all day long. Streets and terraces of more or less pretentious villas and 'desirable residences' have sprung up like mushrooms on every side of the quaint old town: and if the old-fashioned quiet and semi-rurality of the place have disappeared for ever, the tradespeople and others are well contented that it should be so, seeing that where they had one customer twenty years ago, they can now count upon a dozen.

When Mr Tobias Lindley made up his mind to start his nephew in life as a medical practitioner on his own account, it seemed to the shrewd ex-linendraper that the young man could not do better than try his fortune at Medbury Royal; and there, accordingly, Walter was duly established. His uncle had agreed to allow him a hundred pounds the first year, and fifty the second, towards his rent and other expenses; after that time it was hoped that he would be in a position to dispense with further help, which, however, would not be withholden should the necessity for it still exist.

Walter had been more than ordinarily wild and reckless in days gone by; twice had his uncle saved him from disgrace and ruin. The young man was a born gambler; for him horse-racing possessed a fascination which minds differently constituted have no conception of. It was a failing he inherited from his father, who, after ruining himself on the turf, had put an end to his existence. After saving his nephew for the second time, Mr Tobias extorted from him a solemn promise never again to wager on a horse

as long as he lived. The promise was given in all sincerity at a time when Walter was full of the most abject contrition for his wrong-doing. On the strength of that promise, his uncle had shortly afterwards started him in practice at Medbury Royal.

Once a quarter always, sometimes oftener, the elder man made a point of 'looking up' the younger, as he called it, and it is on one of these occasions that we make the acquaintance of uncle and nephew.

Mr Tobias finding his nephew dull and out of sorts, had at once attributed his lowness of spirits to a cause which was far removed from the real one, and had striven to cheer him up with the hope of better days in store, when his name would have become more widely known and his practice treble or quadruple what it was at present. It was something far different which weighed so heavily on his nephew's heart.

When his uncle was gone, Walter went back to his little sitting-room and shut himself in. Black Care perched itself on his chair behind him. Without telling his uncle an absolute lie in the matter, he had undoubtedly led him to believe that he had had nothing whatever to do with horse-racing since the day he had given his promise to that effect, whereas the truth was that a three-months' bill for eighty pounds, which he had given in order to enable him to make good certain losses on the turf, would fall due in ten days' time, and he had not more than ten pounds in the world towards meeting it. At the time when he gave the bill he had felt morally sure that before it fell due he would not only be in a position to take it up, but would have at least a surplus of a couple of hundred pounds into the bargain. It was the old story. Certain information had been imparted to him as a profound secret that such-and-such horses could not possibly fail to win such-and-such races. The prospect was an alluring one: to Walter Lindley it proved one which he was unable to resist. He had laid all the money he could scrape together on the horses in question, not one of which had come in a winner, and the result was that ruin, absolute and irrevocable, stared him in the face. When the folly of which he had been guilty should come to his uncle's ears, and it would be impossible to keep it from him, Walter knew full well that it would be equivalent to a lifelong dismissal. Never would the elder man look upon his degenerate nephew's face again, never again permit him to cross his threshold. But bad as this might be, there was a still blacker feature in Walter's case which weighed more heavily upon him than aught else. Before being able to get his bill discounted, it was requisite that it should be 'backed' by some responsible person. That person Walter had found in a certain Mr Lobb, a retired officer of Excise, whom he had attended professionally through a rather dangerous illness; and who, in return, had contracted a great liking for the frank-seeming, pleasant-looking young doctor. Mr Lobb was an easy-going, good-hearted old bachelor; and when Walter, trumping up some story about having his rent to meet, and not being able to get in what was owing him by his patients, begged him as a great favour to endorse his little bill, Mr Lobb did so without a moment's hesitation. Unfortunately, however, there was one

peculiar feature about the transaction, unknown to any one but the young doctor himself. The bill endorsed by Mr Lobb was for eight pounds only, whereas the bill which would fall due a few days hence was for eighty pounds. Well might his soul shiver within him as he sat there in his lonely room. In flight lay his only chance of safety. He must put half the world between himself and his past life, but never could that past be redeemed. More than once he said to himself: 'Thank Heaven, my mother did not live to see this day!' And then he thought of the way his father had ended his life. He, the son, was treading the same downward path even faster than his father had done: what could he look forward to but a similar end?

His dark broodings were broken by a loud rat-a-tat at the front door, followed by a ring. He was in no mood this evening for visiting any patient; but of course if he were wanted he must go. He heard Hannah, his middle-aged house-keeper, who, with a youth in buttons—at this hour gone home for the night—formed the whole of his small establishment, cross the passage and open the door. Then came a murmur of voices, and then his sitting-room door was opened. 'A gentleman to see you, sir,' said Hannah. The gentleman walked in, and the door was shut behind him.

He was a tall, well-built man, about forty years of age, with a reddish-brown beard, rather closely cropped, and a moustache of the same hue. He had dark, keen, crafty-looking eyes, but was by no means ill-looking. He was well and fashionably dressed. A horse-shoe of brilliants glittered in his scarf, and when he took off his gloves, which he presently did, he displayed three or four rings of price. Of him it might be said, as of so many others, that he was gentlemanly looking without being a gentleman.

'I am addressing myself to Mr Walter Lindley, I presume?' said the stranger as he advanced and took off his hat.

'That is my name,' answered Walter, who had risen and now stood facing the other.

'And mine is Gazebrooke—Mr Weston Gazebrooke—a name you have probably never heard before. I have called to see you this evening on a purely private matter, thinking this would be as likely a time as any to find you disengaged.'

'Pray, be seated, Mr Gazebrooke,' said Walter, not without a slight tremor in his voice. Already the coming of this stranger seemed to him full of evil augury.

'I will come to the object of my visit without delay,' said Mr Gazebrooke, leaning forward with his elbows on the table and confronting the young surgeon. 'I have in my possession a certain bill for the sum of eighty pounds drawn by you, and accepted by a Mr Nicholas Lobb, which bill will fall due in little over a week from now. There is, I presume, Mr Lindley, no doubt as to Mr Lobb's ability to meet the bill in question on presentation?' As he put the query, his eyes were bent full on the face before him, which had faded to the hue of that of a dead man.

For a few moments Walter could not have spoken to save his life. The blow had stunned him. His eyes fell before the keen orbs that to his guilty conscience seemed to be reading him through and through. At length he made shift

to say: 'I see no reason, Mr Gazebrooke, why you should doubt Mr Lobb's ability to meet the bill any more than you might doubt that of any other person who happened to be a stranger to you.'

'Very fairly put,' replied the other. 'Still, you may take it as a fact that I should not be here this evening unless I had what seems to me ample warranty for my visit. Eighty pounds seems rather a large sum for a young man in your position—only just started in practice, as one may say—to negotiate a bill for. I presume there would be no objection to my calling upon the endorser, just by way of refreshing his memory that the eighty pounds will be due ten days from now, either from him or you, or the pair of you. Mr Lobb's house, if I am rightly informed, is only a little way from here, and— But, dear me, Mr Lindley, how dreadfully ill you look! Is there anything I can get you? Shall I ring for your housekeeper?'

'It is nothing. A spasm of the heart—a thing I'm subject to. I shall be better presently,' gasped the miserable young man.

'Ah, decidedly unpleasant, I should think, to have anything the matter with one's heart. Nothing the matter with mine, thank goodness—that is, as far as I know.' He busied himself with the papers in his pocket-book for a few moments while Walter strove to pull himself together.

'If I give you my assurance, Mr Gazebrooke,' he contrived to stammer presently, 'that the bill will be met in due course, there cannot, surely, be any reason why you should trouble Mr Lobb in the affair. I hope, sir, you do not doubt the genuineness of his signature?'

'Not at all, Mr Lindley, not at all,' answered the other with a curious little laugh; 'but what I do doubt is whether Mr Lobb is aware for what amount his endorsement has made him liable. To state the case as briefly as possible: Does Mr Lobb believe himself to be answerable for the sum of eight pounds or eighty? Again he fixed the young doctor with his vulture-like eyes, but from the latter's frozen lips there came no response.

After a few moments of strained silence, Mr Gazebrooke drew from his pocket-book a long narrow strip of bluish paper, with a quantity of writing on it and a stamp at one corner. 'You may perhaps wonder a little, Mr Lindley, at the singularity of my question,' he went on to say, 'just as I might be surprised at your hesitation in answering it—only I'm not. However, the reason for my question is not far to seek. Here is the veritable document itself, made out in due form, for the sum of eighty pounds; but a very cursory examination of it reveals the singular fact that the letter "y" after the word "eight" and the cipher after the figure 8 have been filled in with a different ink, and presumably at a different time from the body of the acceptance; the added letter and the cipher have faded to a dullish brown tint, while the rest of the caligraphy remains as indelibly black as when first written. Now it seems to me, Mr Lindley, that should you not be in a position to explain this little anomaly, Mr Lobb might possibly be able to do so. What say you, young gentleman—what say you?'

'Nothing,' answered the other sullenly, to whom sheer desperation had lent a factitious courage for the time being. 'Go to Lobb, if it so please you. I care not what you do.' Resting his elbows on the table, he covered his face with his hands. At that moment he felt indeed as if he cared not what might become of him.

'Come, come, my friend; never say die,' remarked the other encouragingly. 'Things are seldom so bad but that they might be worse. As for this slip of paper, I won't hurt your feelings by alluding to it further. I understand all about the affair as well as if you had taken half an hour to tell me. You are not the first young fellow by many a hundred who has found himself in Queer Street. Assuming it to be a fact that you are not in a position to meet the bill, the question that presents itself is: What possible alternative is there under the circumstances?' There was a brief pause; then the stranger said interrogatively: 'Supposing I myself take up the bill when it falls due?'

Walter lifted his head from his hands and stared at the other as in doubt whether he had heard aright.

'In other words: supposing I take up the acceptance instead of Mr Lobb?' reiterated Mr Gazebrooke.

'Supposing you do—what then?' queried Walter presently. 'You are a stranger to me, Mr Gazebrooke, and strangers don't usually propose such things without having some object in view. Assuming that you take up the bill, what shall you want me to do in return?—for I'm morally sure you will expect a return of some kind. Shall you want me to administer a dose of prussic acid, or strychnine, to somebody that you are anxious to get rid of?'

Mr Gazebrooke laughed a hollow, mirthless laugh. 'No, no, my friend; I don't require anything one-quarter so terrible at your hands as that. It is creditable to the perspicacity of so young a man that you recognise already one of the hardest facts of life—that in this world nothing is to be had for nothing—that if I help you, I expect you to help me, and vice versa.—Such being the case, if I do this thing for you, it is superfluous to say that I shall expect you to do a trifle for me in return—a mere trifle, I give you my word.'

'I should like to know the nature of the "trifle" in question, Mr Gazebrooke.'

'That is a point, Mr Lindley, respecting which I am sorry to say I cannot at present enlighten you. However, as I said before, it is nothing dreadful—nothing that will in any way compromise you, or cause you to run any risk whatever.' Here he looked at his watch. 'As time is running on and I want to catch the next train back to town, I will state my proposition as concisely as possible. The bill in my possession shall be taken up by me, and neither you nor Mr Lobb shall hear a syllable more about it. Some day, it may be two, three, or even four months hence, I shall call upon you again and ask you to do me a certain little service, which will come entirely in the way of your profession and will cost you nothing. The moment the service in question is completed, the acceptance shall be handed over to you, to burn, or do whatever you like with, and all transactions between us will be at an end.

What say you—yes or no? You must let me have your answer in two minutes.'

It is hardly necessary to say what Walter Lindley's answer was.

Time passed on. The dreaded day came and went, and for anything the young surgeon heard of the matter, no such document as the bill for eighty pounds might have been in existence. The mysterious stranger had evidently been as good as his word. Walter began to breathe more freely. The one great danger was over, and whatever might be the return required at his hands, it could hardly be of a nature to impose upon him a burden so terrible as that from which he had so narrowly escaped. It was impossible that he should feel easy in his mind while a document so fatally compromising as the one retained by Mr Gazebrooke remained in existence; but all he could do was to wait with such patience as he could summon to his aid the *dénouement* of the strange adventure in which, without any exercise of will on his own part, he found himself involved.

Five months and a fortnight had passed when one evening Mr Gazebrooke again made his appearance. 'Here I am once more,' he said with a smile, as he proffered his hand: 'come at last to claim the fulfilment of your promise. I hope you had not quite given up expecting me?'

The two men remained shut up together for upwards of an hour.

Next morning about ten o'clock, just as Lindley was getting ready to start on his first round of visits, a middle-aged woman, a domestic of some kind, to all appearance, was ushered into the surgery. 'If you please, sir,' she said, 'my master, Mr Bolsover of Laburnum Cottage, has sent me to ask you to call on him. He's caught a bad cold, and feels very queer and out of sorts this morning.'

The young doctor paused in the act of brushing his hat, and for a few seconds every vestige of colour fled from his face. His summons had come at last.

'Tell your master that I will be with him in the course of an hour,' he answered.

'If you please, sir, I be a little bit deaf,' responded the woman, putting her hand to her ear and going a step or two nearer.

Walter repeated his words in a louder tone, whereupon the woman courtesied and went.

GENTLEWOMEN IN QUEEN ANNE'S TIME.

It is common in the present day to hear much of schemes for the 'higher education of women,' of colleges where girls compete with their brothers for honours in academic learning, and of all that advance in culture of which we are so proud. But if we glance back at the domestic life of our ancestors as depicted, for instance, in the reign of good Queen Anne, shall we not be forced to own that we lack something of the industry, the energy, the household accomplishments, and the mental vigour as displayed by them? Finding what were some of the qualifications thought best to become a gentlewoman then, shall we say that our own ways are so vastly superior?

It was expected that a gentlewoman should

understand the Latin tongue, to enable her to write and speak true and good English: and that she should also master the French and Italian languages. Her reading, besides the books of piety in vogue, such as Bishop Usher's *Body of Divinity*, Mr Firman's *Real Christian*, and others, embraced those romances which treated of gallantry and virtue, whose old-fashioned names of *Chelia*, *Grand Cyrus*, *Parthenessa*, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, &c., have passed from the range of modern book-lists, though the last-named may chance to be met with still, albeit but little read by our girls. She was also expected not to neglect authors in foreign tongues, by which her fancy might be tickled or her understanding furnished; and yet she was enjoined, when in public society, 'to tip her tongue with silence,' though 'not to be altogether silent, for that is a misbecoming error, but in speaking, to do it knowingly and opportunely.'

In the rush of life in these railroad and electric days, do not some of us almost sigh for the leisurely time when a gentlewoman also counted among her accomplishments, over and above singing, dancing, and playing on several sorts of musical instruments, these: 'Making all manner of pretty toys for closets. Frames for looking-glasses, pictures, or the like. Feathers of crewl for the corner of beds. Preserving all kinds of sweetmeats wet and dry. Setting out of banquets. Making salves, ointments, waters, cordials; healing any wounds not desperately dangerous. Knowledge in discerning the symptoms of most diseases, and giving such remedies as are fit in such cases. Limning. All manner of cookery. Great skill in all kinds of works wrought with a needle. Washing black or white sarsnets. Making sweet powders for the hair or to lay among linen.'

Surely, then, on the faces of the young girls, as their varied employments called forth sympathies and resource, there was none of the lassitude and melancholy that one can but notice with regret among the fashionable maidens of our day. The mere making of 'salves, ointments, and cordials' must, we think, have gone far to heal any wounds of their own 'not desperately dangerous.' And we can imagine the glow of healthy employment their cheeks would wear after the 'washing of black or white sarsnets,' to say nothing of the deeper tint displayed when they came forth from instruction in 'all manner of cookery,' with buoyant step, and dignified with a sweet content.

With us, a refined civilisation in removing the need for household production of various sorts has brought about the fact of an immense number of unemployed women, who have, as it were, to make work for themselves, which has none of the warm interest inspired by necessary or useful labour, and has set ennui and listlessness in our midst. Though we must own that this same civilisation has weeded out some uncouth behaviour which ill befitted gentlewomen; for what a shock our sensibilities would receive could we be present at table in 1672, when such advice as this to ladies was necessary: 'Fill not your mouth so full that your cheeks shall swell like a pair of Scotch bagpipes; neither cut your meat into too big pieces. Gnaw no bones with your teeth, nor suck them to come at the marrow. Be cautious and not over-forward in dipping or sopping in the

dish. Do not bawl out aloud for anything you want, as: "I would have some of that," "I like not this," "I hate onions," "Give me no pepper;" but whisper softly to one, that he or she may without noise supply your wants. In carving at your own table, distribute the best pieces first, and it will appear very comely and decent to use a fork; if so, touch no piece of meat without it. I have been invited to dinner where I have seen the good gentlewoman of the house sweat more in cutting up of a fowl than the cookmaid in roasting it; and when she had soundly beliquor'd her joints, hath suckt her knuckles, and to work with them again in the dish.'

Poor lady! The emancipation of 'diner à la Russe' was not for her, and whether she would or not, 'sweat' she must over her work until she had obtained the mastery of the commendable art of cookery; ay, and she must too, would she be considered a complete housewife, learn the quaint terms used at home and abroad for dividing various sorts of food, as it was proper to say: 'Thigh that woodcock, thigh that pigeon; Mince that plover; Wing that quail, wing that partridge; Allay that pheasant; Untach that curlew, Unjoint that bittern; Disfigure that peacock; Display that crane; Dismember that hern; Unbrace that mallard; Fruit that chicken; Spoil that hen; Sauce that capon; Lift that swan; Rear that goose; Tire that egg,' &c.

Let us hope that time and patience enabled her at last to deal with even so noble a bird as a swan, and that she could 'lift' it to her own and her friends' satisfaction. But it may be she was more skilful with the pen than with the knife, and was so polished in the matter and form of her compositions that we should scarcely believe—had we perused her writings—that they would have come from the same hand that played such an ungraceful part in the dish. It is not given to each to excel in all, and we may well believe that carving was her least virtue. To write well was esteemed an essential part of a woman's education, and it may be a fitting finish to our sketch if we learn something of the epistolary style then in vogue, as shown in the following letter. It is from a daughter in answer to her mother, who would have persuaded her from wearing spots and black patches on her face. Thus:

MADAM—It is as well religion as duty in me to render you all observances, which I shall make my delight as well as employment. My greatest blessing is the continuance of your love, which obligeth me to increase my thankfulness as well as my obedience. I perceive some censorious tongue hath been too busy with my face, and hath endeavoured to throw dirt on it, because it hath been lately spotted in the fashion, a fashion that hath as much innocence to plead for its excuse as custom for its authority. Venus the goddess of beauty was born with a *motticella*, or natural beauty-spot, as if nature had set forth a pattern for art to imitate. You may see every day some little clouds over the face of the sun, yet he is not ashamed of his attraction; nay, some of late with an optick-glass have discovered some *macule* or spots in the very face of the sun, yet they are not attributed as his deformities. The moon, when she is at full and shining in her greatest lustre, hath in her face some remarkable

spots, and herein is placed her chiefest glory, as being in everything inconstant but in this. When I put on my mask, which is no more nor better than one great patch, you do commend me for it; and will you be displeased with me for wearing a few black patches? which, if they are cut into stars, do represent unto me whither I would go; or if into little worms, whither I must go: it is the unhappiness of the most harmless things to be subject to the greatest misconstruction. Black bags on the head are not much older than the black spots on the face, and much less may be said for them, only they have had the good luck in the city not to meet with contradiction, although in the country they are much cavil'd at unless worn by gentlewomen of eminent note and quality. Nevertheless, according to the obligation of my duty to give you in all things satisfaction, I am determined to wear them no more, not that I find any such vanity in them, but that by the fruits of my obedience you may perceive what an absolute power your commands have over her who is, Madam, Your most humble and most obedient daughter. S. M.

Here is a style as alien from the popular postcard and sixpenny telegram as is the instantaneous photograph from a carefully painted miniature. All good in their own time and place; but let us beware lest our day should aptly illustrate the proverb of 'Much haste less speed,' for in some of our works we may find ourselves behind instead of in advance of those whom we are accustomed to consider as inferior to ourselves in learning and general culture.

THE MOCKING-BIRD.

JOHN WALLER carefully timed his murderous visit to Daniel Jaggard's bungalow. Jaggard's nigger, Quash, was out of the way, picking oranges for the market from the grove by the river-side. There was no living creature within half a mile of them, when he stepped into the room where Jaggard was sitting writing. A mocking-bird of course did not count. The bird was in a large cage in one corner of the room, while Jaggard's table was by the window fronting the pine-forest.

'You, John!' exclaimed Jaggard, laying down his pen. 'Well, I'm glad to see you. Sit down.'

'No,' said Waller. 'Reckon it's not pleasure I'm here for; it's downright business. Once for all, will you leave Sybil Macdonald to me? It's an old tale by this, and I'm not going through it again. Before you came, she cottoned to me, and no other man. I'm mad on her.—But it's different since'—

'My good man'—

'None o' that.—Yes or no?'

'Well, certainly "No" in that case.'

'Then, by thunder, your last minute has come.'

They were both strong men, at their strongest, but Jaggard was taken unawares. Waller's bowie was in him to the hilt before he could stand up. With a sob of pain, he sidled heavily to the ground in a widening pool of blood. The stab was mortal. He groaned, writhed, tried

to lift himself on his elbows, gasped forth the words, 'John did it,' and was then seized by the death-agonies, and died. Waller, who had narrowly watched the whole scene, shrugged his shoulders, wiped the knife upon his victim's clothes, and left the house.

During the progress of this tragedy the mocking-bird had stood to attention, with its head on one side. Only by an occasional quick nervous movement of its long tail did it show sign of life. But when Waller had left the room and stealthily glided into the pinewoods adjacent to the house, then, with erect head and a grand air, the bird mimicked the gruesome spectacle from beginning to end. It gave the various intonations of the two men in their brief interchange of speech; and finished with a wondrous mockery of the dying efforts of its master. This done, the bird stalked to a piece of meat at one end of its cage, and dined to its contentment.

Now, when this sad occurrence came to be discussed, it seemed clear to every one that Quash, the nigger, had murdered his master. What more obvious? Quash was a peculiar man, even for a dorky. His emotion over Jaggard's body was pronounced exaggerated. It was indeed the sublime of black cunning. They carried him off to the prison-house of Waterville, and put his very tears and wailing about the goodness of the man who was dead in the balance against him. There was talk about lynching him. But that the City Marshal took pains to guard against. The City Marshal had a long white beard and a broad brow. He was the Nestor of Hernando county, and he said that it was possible Quash was not the culprit. This oracular ruling saved the nigger.

Among all the orange growers round Waterville none were more interested in the murder than Mrs Macdonald and her daughter Sybil. They had emigrated from England in 1884. Mrs Macdonald was a masterful woman. Sybil was nineteen, with purpled eyes beautiful to look upon, notwithstanding the swart complexion she owed to the Florida sun. It was these purpled eyes that had fascinated Waller. By-and-by, when Jaggard arrived and took up land in the neighbourhood, he also sacrificed to them. Sybil respected Waller as a shrewd steady worker, sure of a competence in a few years. Jaggard she grew to love, though he was poor. But to Mrs Macdonald there was no crime like poverty, and so Sybil had kept her love in her own heart. However, Jaggard had learnt to read in her eyes, and he understood her. Therefore, when the murder was bruited, the shock to the Macdonalds was great, and to Sybil, stunning. 'Mother,' she said quietly, when they had brought over the news, 'I believe I could kill that wicked brute if he were here—kill him with my own hands.'

'It will be all one to Quash in the end whether you or the Marshal kill him,' remarked Mrs Macdonald. 'I guess he'll hang ere this day week.'

It was decided to hold the inquiry in Jaggard's own room. In the interval the house had been put in charge of a poor Seminole who had wandered up into Hernando county. He knew little English, but that little was more than enough, as he had no one to talk to except the mocking-bird, whom, with the craft of a child of nature,

he coaxed into the utterance of a multitude of excruciating noises.

The room was filled, and a block of people stood outside also, between the open window and the pine-forest. All Jaggard's intimate acquaintance had been subpoenaed. Thus the Macdonalds and John Waller himself were there—Sybil and Waller looking somewhat uncomfortable; but Mrs Macdonald with merely a tight mouth, as if she resented such an unprofitable waste of time. Quash, with bracelets on and shedding tears as fast as he could, was present of course. Never did an innocent nigger offer so pitiable a spectacle as he. But no one compassionated him. The only pity at his service was what he might receive from the cold barrels of seven or eight six-shooters.

This lively gathering in the room which it had been wont to consider sacred to itself and its master (whom it loved in bird-fashion), at first frightened the mocking-bird. It tried to obliterate itself in the darkest corner of its cage. By-and-by, however, it appeared to take an interest in the proceedings. It trod forward, inch by inch, until it was as near to the assembly as its cage permitted. Some one gave it a lump of sugar, but it neglected the sugar when the City Marshal began to speak. Quash interrupted the Marshal with a passionate repudiation of something the Marshal said. At this the bird cocked its head, and redoubled its attention.

The evidence was purely circumstantial. Quash, when called upon to defend himself, could say nothing but commonplaces. He loved Mister Jaggard too much to think of killing him—would rather put the knife into his own black bosom: and so forth. He shed additional tears, too. All which was no defence at all. And so, when he was silenced, it was apparent that he would be judged 'guilty.'

But the City Marshal was not satisfied. He had never seen a nigger weep like Quash, he said. 'I want to know something about Jaggard's personal habits,' he observed. 'Was he likely to commit suicide, for instance?—Mr John Waller, you, I think, knew him pretty well.'

'Yes, I knew him well,' replied Waller, standing up, and feeling very sick.

You should have seen the excitement of the mocking-bird when it heard Waller's voice.

'Now, what do you think about this business, Mr Waller?' asked the Marshal.

'John did it! John did it!' screamed the bird, which then, with a splutter of effort, reproduced the sounds emitted by Jaggard when he died. The noise of its wings against its cage-bars drew every eye towards it; and holding fast to the side of the cage, it once more stammered forth in low clear tones, but agonised, as if exhausted: 'John did it.' But what electrified the audience was the unmistakable imitation of a death-rattle and choke with which it favoured them. After the performance, it leaped lightly back to its centre bar, and with the toes of one leg demurely scratched its head-feathers. There was no misconstruing this mock-drama.

The City Marshal was the first to give Waller a look of scrutiny. Sybil and her mother were hardly less alert. As for Quash, his black face lit up with a sudden glory. And the assembled townspeople, having briefly wondered, were led by

the tendency of the eyes of the Marshal, the ladies, and Quash, to look where they looked. What did they see?

Waller, when he heard the bird speak, was not immensely moved; but the terrible iteration of the death-agony put a seal of veracity upon the words, and instantly he realised that his doom was upon him. An acute pain took him at the heart; he went ghastly pale; his eyes dimmed, so that he saw the eyes of his neighbours and acquaintance centred upon him as it were through a mist; and he reeled forwards, doubled upon the chair in front of him. When they tried to lift him, they found that he was dead.

'I rather guess,' observed the City Marshal, 'there's a kind of a link between the inquest we're holding to-day and the one we'll hold to-morrow which it'll be awkward to lay hands on.'

OCEAN CONCERTS.

To those who love the sea, it supplies an ever-varying source of actual and speculative pleasure. Whether it be in the physical delights of boating or sailing, walking over the ozone-laden cliffs, or sitting in dreamy self-forgetfulness where the waves plash ceaselessly against the base of the pier, the illimitable restless ocean is always enchanting to the view; whilst its near contiguity soothes the troubled mind. It is given but to a small minority of the human race thoroughly to appreciate the qualities of the mermaid's beautiful domain. Every one of course is gratified by the appearance of the sea when its placid bosom reflects in rich shades of gold and ultramarine the bright concave hemisphere of sunlit sky overhead. But to the true lover each and all of the changeable moods of his mistress are dear; and so it is with those who are wedded to this great half of nature. There is much of beauty as well as of impressive majesty in the giant waves as they dash their curling crests of tawny-coloured foam against the base of some huge rock, or seize madly upon the pebbly beach as though they would beat their way deep into the earth. And on the day succeeding a storm, what a wealth of romantic association there is in the long sweep of the yet sullen discontented roller which rebelliously submits to the prospect of peaceful calm, so gloriously heralded in by the keen clear air and cloudless sky. What cruel pitiless deeds this angry beauty may have committed in the preceding hours of relentless fury no one shall ever know, and it seems as though her inward spirit were still chafing at being balked of further excesses.

But amidst the many strange sights and sounds of which the ocean is so prolific, few can compare with what may be aptly termed an 'ocean concert.' Perhaps the first picture conveyed to the mind of the reader by such a phrase will be that of a transatlantic liner ploughing her way from Liverpool to New York, whilst in her main saloon some of the passengers are giving the time-honoured and praiseworthy 'instrumental and vocal enter-

tainment, the proceeds of which will be devoted to the funds of the Sailors' Orphanage,' the affair being precisely similar, save for the surroundings, to some hundreds of others which may be in progress at the same moment in various towns and villages of the United Kingdom. No; it is of a very different musical performance we speak, a dramatic and weird natural oratorio not often to be heard or witnessed, full of grandeur and awe and mystery. Come quietly down to the seashore and an imaginary dress-rehearsal shall take place, for the bountiful goddess of fancy will supply any necessary elements which may not be present for the occasion. The night is not dark, for the moon is high in the firmament, and her silvery rays are reproduced in a million glimmering fragments of sheen on the dancing surface of the water. The air is very still, and the waves plash quietly on the sand, whilst far away in the deep blue vista shine little dots of light, the sole indications of the presence of mighty steamers and more graceful sailing vessels.

But what is that white moving mass over there in the horizon? It is a thick wall of fog, which rapidly yet imperceptibly makes its insidious approach, and, almost before the spectator feels its chilly embrace, the fair scene of sea and sky, with the twinkling lights and the dancing moonbeams, is shut out from view, and nothing remains but an opaque luminosity, which obscures all objects except a few stones or a sand-drift at one's feet. This is but the prelude to the concert, which is speedily inaugurated by a hoarse note from the foghorn of a neighbouring steamer. One loud and long-sustained blast, and then, for a moment, silence, which is soon broken by the shrill cry of a seagull hurtling through the air *en route* to some distant cliff. And then, with a terrific concatenation of sound, the entire orchestra exerts its full force. Foghorns of every conceivable note and pitch, some hoarse and deep-toned; some shrieking in the treble clef; some tuned in double notes; some alternately ascending to a third or a fifth; some giving vent to a chord the existence of which Mozart or Beethoven never dreamed of even in their most delirious moments of harmonic conception; some in irregular spasmodic efforts breaking from B flat into F sharp, but all wild, incoherent, weird in the extreme, join in this unique double-forte passage with abnormal unison.

High over this indescribable din resounds the shrill scream of the steam-whistle, fitfully asserting its ear-splitting power by short jerky snaps or long-drawn shrieks; whilst in regular, even pulsation may be heard through all the noise the deep full clang of the warning bells on board the sailing-vessels. For fully a minute does this solemn *ensemble* continue; but at last, as though in obedience to an unseen conductor's baton, the different instruments are hushed, and the sad low song of the waves is heard, as in mournful cadence they fall on the shore, and retreat again to the watery depths, churning up the shells and pebbles and seaweed as they go.

But now another sound breaks on the ears, for in fitful irregular beats the distant bell-buoy

faithfully performs its duty by warning the unsuspecting mariner of the whereabouts of the hidden rock on which it is anchored. No wonder that Ralph the Rover was roundly cursed by the Abbot of Aberbrothock; and full richly did he deserve the fate which met him on the self-same spot where the bell sank gurgling in the waves. For now, listen to that loud sharp whistle which travels like an arrow through the air. It is the signal that some gallant bark is about to haul in her halliards and change her course, owing to her captain having heard the guardian bell. Not for long, however, does this peaceful interlude continue.

Again does the great crash of instruments come across the water in a grand diapason, seeming as though the musicians of Pandemonium were out for a holiday, and fantastically reminding the listener of some elfin performance of the overture to *William Tell*. Yet, notwithstanding all the force of the steam-breath issuing from multitudinous brazen throats, the gentle wash of the breakers cannot be altogether stilled, whilst the invisibility of the many agents employed in this ocean cantata lends a degree of speculative mystery thereto which can only be felt, not uttered. And so the great concert goes on, becoming more weird and gruesome every moment, until suddenly the listener on the shore is aware that there has been a longer period of silence than usual. At once the mind flies to mad conjecture. What can have happened? Has there been a collision, and have two of those ponderous steamers, with their great staring eyes and huge funnels emitting dense clouds of smoke, remorselessly attacked each other, and gone down with a gurgling rush beneath the waves, accompanied by the cries and prayers of drowning men? And what a fearful fate is this. Oliver Wendell Holmes somewhere speaks of the two vessels running, from the moment they were launched, from different ends of the same groove, so that, no matter how tortuous or extended its windings, they were finally destined to crash together in its track with a sickening thud. Has one of these dread encounters taken place out there in the midst of the watery waste, and are the other vessels rendered silent with awful expectancy of the same fate? Even while such thoughts course through the brain, a veil is taken from before the eyes. As though by a magician's wish, the ocean discards its foggy shroud, the moonbeams again ripple on the water, and the fleeting lights stand out in diamond specks on the deep ultramarine carpet. So after all the fogbank has only come up from the seaward with a gentle breeze, and its white ghostlike wraiths are now vanishing over the distant hills.

Yet its advent was sufficient to cause anxiety on board every vessel in the offing.—Hark! What causes that loud throbbing sound away to the left? It is a large steamship, whose iron framework has polarised her compasses, and when the fog cleared off, her captain found that she was heading direct for the land.

As we turn to leave the grand amphitheatre which has so lately staged our ocean concert, a noise of puffing and blowing and tumbling about in the water is heard at some little distance. It is a porpoise, perhaps a descendant of the gentle-

man who aided the dolphin in his endeavour to win for Neptune the affections of Amphitrite. He also has been an auditor of the oceanic cantata, and he has evidently enjoyed it.

SOMETHING GREAT.

THE trial was ended—the vigil past;
All clad in his arms was the knight at last,
The goodliest knight in the whole wide land,
With eyes that shone with a purpose grand.
The king looked on him with gracious eyes,
And said: 'He is meet for some high emprise.'
To himself he thought: 'I will conquer fate;
I will surely die, or do something great.'

So from the palace he rode away;
There was trouble and need in the town that day:
A child had strayed from his mother's side
Into the woodland dark and wide.
'Help!' cried the mother, with sorrow wild—
'Help me, Sir Knight, to seek my child!
The hungry wolves in the forest roam;
Help me to bring my lost one home!'

He shook her hand from his bridle rein:
'Alas! poor mother, you ask in vain.
Some meaner succour will do, maybe,
Some squire or varlet of low degree.
There are mighty wrongs in the world to right;
I keep my sword for a noble fight.
I am sad at heart for your baby's fate,
But I ride in haste to do something great.'

One wintry night, when the sun had set,
A blind old man by the way he met:
'Now, good Sir Knight, for Our Lady's sake,
On the sightless wanderer pity take!
The wind blows cold, and the sun is down:
Lead me, I pray, till I reach the town.'
'Nay,' said the knight; 'I cannot wait;
I ride in haste to do something great.'

So on he rode in his armour bright,
His sword all keen for the longed-for fight.
'Laugh with us—laugh!' cried the merry crowd.
'Oh weep!' wailed others, with sorrow bowed.
'Help us!' the weak and weary prayed.
But for joy, nor grief, nor need he stayed.
And the years rolled on, and his eyes grew dim,
And he died—and none made moan for him.

He missed the good that he might have done;
He missed the blessings he might have won.
Seeking some glorious task to find,
His eyes to all humbler work were blind.
He that is faithful in that which is least,
Is bidden to sit at the heavenly feast.
Yet men and women lament their fate,
If they be not called to do something great.

FLORENCE TYLER.

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